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**Statement of  
The Honorable Dale R. Marks  
Performing the Duties of the  
Deputy Undersecretary of War for  
Acquisition & Sustainment**

**Before the House Committee on Armed Services  
Subcommittee on Readiness**

**Department of War  
Energy, Installations and Environment Update**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Bergman, Ranking Member Garamendi, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide a program update for the Department of War's (DoW) energy, installations, and environment portfolio.

The 2026 National Defense Strategy (NDS) lays out a clear objective for the Department: be the sword and shield to deter war, with the goal of peace—but be ready to fight and win the nation's wars if called upon. To achieve these objectives, we must ensure we are postured to maximize our Warriors' lethality while defending the homeland against a wide range of threats. We must be clear-eyed about these threats and prioritize the ones that pose the gravest risk to Americans' security, freedom, and prosperity.

Our installations are more than just enablers of this critical priority. They are weapons systems that operationalize energy and resources through responsible stewardship and strategic partnerships, delivering quality support to our Warriors and their families and increasing their mission readiness. Our installations are the foundations of our national security posture, and I look forward to working with this committee in the coming months to ensure they are postured to support the 2026 NDS; maintain our status as the world's strongest, most lethal, and most capable military; and ensure peace through strength.

## **DEFENDING THE HOMELAND**

The 2026 NDS recognizes our foremost priority is to defend the U.S. Homeland against the growing capability of our adversaries, ranging from nuclear threats to a variety of advanced conventional strike, space, cyber, and electromagnetic warfare capabilities. Countering these threats requires our installations to be ready to defend against them while also being resilient enough to sustain critical missions under contested conditions.

To meet these challenges, the Department is continuing to prioritize initiatives that reduce our reliance on vulnerable systems and address challenges from aging and deteriorating infrastructure and increasingly complex operational demands. This includes advancing initiatives to support American energy dominance and critical minerals exploration—both essential for national security and mission readiness.

Building on significant progress in fielding microgrids, energy storage, and efficiency upgrades, we are further bolstering energy resilience and asserting American energy dominance by advancing grid optimization and investing in next-generation technologies like advanced nuclear, geothermal, and long-duration battery storage and accelerating actions to ensure water security. Similarly, we are enhancing our digital warfighting backbone by beginning the process to site data centers on federal lands. This will ensure we can protect critical command and control capabilities from adversary attacks, minimize risks from extreme weather, and ensure access to a highly competitive water supply environment.

The Department is also actively supporting critical minerals exploration to secure and process materials vital to support warfighter needs. To this end the Department is identifying mineral

deposits on DoW installations and is working with industry to develop critical mineral and rare earth element potential lease opportunities. At the same time, we are ensuring that the siting for these operations maintains compatibility consistent with national security, military operations, training, and testing to sustain operational effectiveness while continuing to support resource security and technological innovation.

Several critical innovation programs form the foundation of these efforts, supporting the Department's priorities by funding the development and demonstration of mission-critical energy capabilities that ultimately advance technologies with demonstrated performance to meet mission needs. These include the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) and the Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP), which address critical resilience challenges, including energy security, water resource management, extreme weather vulnerabilities, and environmental cleanup. SERDP and ESTCP investments include cybersecure microgrids, decision support tools to streamline installation resiliency, effective and scalable per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) treatment technologies, and alternatives that reduce the impacts of defense-critical chemicals. These investments protect the Department's operational capabilities while reducing costs across installations. Through collaboration with industry and academia, SERDP and ESTCP ensure rapid transition of innovations from laboratories to military installations to address both immediate threats and long-term resilience needs for warfighters and their families.

Through these efforts, the Department is strengthening the resilience and operational readiness of military installations to defend the U.S. Homeland against rapidly evolving threats, while adapting to the demands of modern warfare. By integrating advanced energy technologies and securing critical resources, the Department is advancing strategic priorities in national security, energy resilience, and operational effectiveness. These initiatives also support broader national objectives—including grid optimization, safe and secure water supplies, American energy dominance, and critical minerals exploration—ensuring the United States remains prepared to confront emerging challenges and sustain its strategic advantage in a complex global environment.

### **SUPPORTING LETHALITY**

The strength and lethality of our military is built both on the weapon systems that defend us, and on the readiness of our Service members, and their families, to accomplish this mission. And make no mistake: our installations are weapon systems, just like our ships, tanks, and planes. We must ensure that they are postured—in terms of quality, condition, and laydown—to carry out the entire spectrum of military operations.

As the statutory lead for operational energy activities in the DoW, my office is focused on ensuring Joint Forces have the energy needed to defend the Homeland and deter forward in contested environments characterized by increasing risks from kinetic threats, cyber-attacks, and political-economic influence.

In partnership with U.S. Transportation Command and the Joint Staff, we are aligning worldwide requirements for energy storage and distribution with Department resources. To ensure sufficient

capacity to meet evolving needs, the Department is evaluating risks, adapting our terrestrial and afloat Joint bulk fuel networks, and improving capabilities to sustain forces in austere, high threat environments. Across the entire Department, we are adapting policies and governance to meet the realities of contested logistics and ensuring an agile and focused approach to identifying, assessing, and mitigating energy-related operational risks to deterrence and warfighting missions.

We are also applying data analytics to achieve decision dominance. My office is leading the development of modular, interoperable, and government-owned software that delivers an enduring analytic capability to inform and accelerate critical acquisition decisions. The Resilient Logistics Operations & Analytics Demonstrator (RELOAD) will assess the effects of disrupted logistical support on combat operations and emphasize operational impact on the attainment of military objectives as unifying measure of effectiveness. To pursue Secretary Hegseth's goal of accelerated acquisition, we are applying RELOAD to the evaluation of contested logistics as a key prioritized operational problem and the development of mitigations to these risks. Over the long-term, RELOAD will support a repeatable, resilient, logistically informed model for assessing future joint operational challenges.

Complementing these efforts are two research and development funds that invest in early-stage energy innovation for military capabilities to achieve energy superiority for U.S. Joint Forces and missions. The Operational Energy Capability Improvement Fund (OECIF) focuses on pre-commercial military-unique technology development, and the Operational Energy Prototype Fund (OEPF) accelerates technology transition and promotes rapid fielding to warfighters. Innovation priorities focus on: OE Dominance – integrating power and energy information in CJADC2 for shaping and decision making at all echelons; Mobility – next generation propulsion for crewed/uncrewed/optionally-crewed platforms, and power and energy mission planning / in-route visibility for next generation platforms; Combat Power – implementation of ground and space-based power beaming and in-space refueling and robotics.

#### *Energy in Capability Development*

Any misalignment between the Joint Force's growing energy needs and our ability to deliver that energy creates operational risks and can undermine mission effectiveness. In addition to bolstering the supplies of bulk fuel networks, we are supporting changes that address the long-term need for energy and support the imperatives of speed, agility, and lethality that are driving Department reforms to requirements and acquisition. By ensuring energy and water requirements and logistical feasibility are analyzed early in a program's lifecycle, we are empowering Program Acquisition Executives and Program Managers to make informed, risk-based decisions and prevent costly, time-consuming redesigns. Furthermore, we are accelerating the adoption of mission-critical innovations, such as standardized batteries and technologies developed across the Department and industry, to ensure warfighters have the most advanced, interoperable, and resilient energy solutions needed for success in contested environments.

#### *Supporting Defense Communities*

The Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) continues to support our military installations and surrounding defense communities through technical and financial assistance to foster cooperation to enhance the military mission; achieve facility and infrastructure savings and reduced operating costs; address encroachment and compatible land

use issues; increase military, civilian, and industrial readiness; and support military families. OLDCC works with defense communities to further the Secretary's priorities, ensuring their efforts help to enhance the readiness and lethality of military installations, ranges, and test facilities.

The Department appreciates Congress' continued support of the Defense Community Infrastructure Program which awarded ten grants in Fiscal Year 2025, leveraging an additional \$59.9 million in non-federal funding for a total investment of \$150 million in civilian critical infrastructure projects that enhance mission readiness and support the warfighter and military families.

Last year, the 129 unfunded proposals represented \$1.4 billion in requested federal funding and \$296 million in additional non-federal funding investments that would benefit our military installations. OLDCC expects to commence a \$230 million Defense Community Infrastructure Program competition for Fiscal Year 2026 this spring, combining funds from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and Fiscal Year 2026 Defense Appropriations into one competition.

### **IMPROVING EFFICIENCY**

To support the NDS, the Department must ensure its resources are singularly focused on the Department's core mission of defending the Nation, and we continue to meet the Secretary's call to focus on eliminating waste and duplication.

#### *Streamlining Implementation of Environmental Requirements*

A significant area of opportunity to improve efficiency and effectiveness in our delivery of capability to our warfighters is to eliminate delays within the environmental permitting process. As part of our response to Executive Order 14154, Unleashing American Energy, and the Presidential Memorandum: Updating Permitting Technology for the 21st Century, the Department is working internally and with other key stakeholders in the Administration, such as the Council on Environmental Quality, to streamline how DoW implements the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Department has identified opportunities to innovate processes, leverage technology, and develop interoperability across various programs and environmental data systems with focus to enable streamlined environmental requirements and decision management for the Department. My team continues to work closely with internal partner offices to assess and execute environmental requirements across various programs, to include expanding critical minerals capabilities and efforts to modernize the industrial base.

The Department recognizes that we have an immense responsibility to protect the health of the warfighter, their communities, as well as the natural resources entrusted to us and we are working to ensure we are maximizing our readiness and resilience while demonstrating responsible stewardship decisions.

### *MILCON and FSRM Review*

Given the size and scope of the Department's infrastructure footprint, the Military Construction (MILCON) and Facilities Sustainment, Restoration & Modernization (FSRM) investment portfolios represent a significant opportunity to maximize the effectiveness of taxpayer dollars while improving the readiness and lethality of our warfighters.

Under current processes, a military construction can take five years to be incorporated in a budget request to Congress and once funded, can take potentially another four years to obtain beneficial use. The Department must develop more timely and flexible processes and organizational structures to enable more agile delivery of infrastructure needs.

Last year, the Deputy Secretary of War charged my office to conduct comprehensive reviews of the Department's MILCON and FSRM portfolios. In coordination with the Military Departments, Office of General Counsel, and industry experts, we are developing recommendations for proposed regulatory and/or statutory changes, updates to DoW policy, and process improvements that improve cost structure, efficiency of execution, and lifecycle sustainment.

The comprehensive reform of our Unified Facilities Criteria in particular is yielding exceptional results, as our 25 Tri-Service discipline working groups are streamlining documents to a fraction of their original size. This has been achieved by strategically separating mandatory requirements from supplemental commentary, reducing or eliminating discretionary requirements, consolidating approximately 120 separate documents into a single comprehensive digital code, and further aligning our criteria with proven industry codes and standards. This foundational streamlining is creating clear, data-structured criteria which is an essential step to implement next-generation AI tools. The revised content will be available in June and position us to ensure the innovative and cost-effective management of our military installations, infrastructure, and facilities well into the future.

### *Maximizing the Department's Real Estate Portfolio*

The Department is looking to increase usage of its 10 U.S.C. 2667 lease authority through enhanced-use leases to generate cash or in-kind consideration for the Department (e.g., leasing of DoW lands for AI data centers and mineral production). Likewise, the Department is also exploring opportunities to rapidly divest itself of excess property through sale or exchange to generate cash returns that the Department can broadly use to meet the Secretary of War's funding priorities. Accordingly, the Department is exploring new and enhanced authorities to support these goals, while also keeping this Committee informed of these efforts.

### *Intergovernmental Support Agreements*

Intergovernmental support agreements (IGSAs) are powerful tools that improve efficiency at our installations by leveraging the existing capabilities of our community partners to deliver installation support services. Examples of current IGSAs include a partnership between the State of North Carolina and the Navy for airfield support services at the Global TransPark in Kinston, NC, and an IGSA with the Denali Commission—an independent federal agency designed to provide critical utilities and infrastructure support throughout Alaska—to execute several key projects in Adak, Alaska which will expand contingency and training opportunities for both U.S.

Northern Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. The Department will continue looking to maximize IGSA opportunities..

## **QUALITY OF LIFE**

Our Warriors’ readiness starts at home. They should be able to focus on their missions without having to worry about issues with their housing or about the health and safety of their family members back home. Restoring quality of life standards is a critical component to reviving our warrior ethos and rebuilding our military and the Department remains committed to ensuring that these issues are addressed so that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Guardians can bring 100% of themselves to their missions.

### **Housing**

As the Secretary of War has made clear, quality housing is critical to mission readiness, and we are all-in on providing the safe, high-quality conditions our Warriors and their families deserve. At his direction, the Department is aggressively confronting challenges across the entire housing portfolio—from government-controlled housing to privatized family homes—to correct deficiencies caused by decades of underfunding and lack of oversight, and to restore faith in our housing.

These efforts are centered around two recently-created task forces which are designed to execute a targeted, expeditious strategy to fix the unique challenges within our unaccompanied and family housing portfolios.

On October 6, 2025, Secretary Hegseth established the Barracks Task Force (BTF) with the mandate to “find it, fix it” to ensure all barracks are “Safe, Clean, and Comfortable”. As its initial action, the BTF conducted comprehensive, wall-to-wall inspections, delivering immediate improvements for ~237,000 Warriors. These initial fixes were enabled by \$1.2B in funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act to address critical life, health, and safety issues, including HVAC and plumbing repairs, mold remediation, fixing water intrusions from roofs and windows, and repairing door locks and installing security cameras in our Warriors’ barracks. The BTF’s ongoing efforts are focused on ensuring that the Department’s unaccompanied housing habitability standard policy is implemented across all military installations, improving maintenance workflows, instituting new quality control measures, optimizing barracks investments, and providing free wireless internet across all barracks. My office, with the support of the Military Departments, is laser focused on ensuring the Secretary of War’s directive to make all barracks “Safe, Clean, and Comfortable” is carried out to completion.

Further, to evaluate performance and restore financial viability across the ~204,000 privatized family homes in the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI), the Department is in the process of establishing a Housing Task Force & Deal Team (HTFDT). This task force will work to create fiscally responsible solutions to ensure the long-term viability of these critical housing assets. To accomplish this, the Department will review all housing agreements. Our evaluation will assess project capital reserves to develop sustainment strategies, recommend restructuring underperforming agreements, and recommend improved terms by which all deals will be

executed. Going forward, privatized housing deals will provide improved outcomes for our Warriors, their families, and the American taxpayer.

As the Department rapidly pursues improvement in its housing portfolio, we have also continued to focus on improving housing oversight and accountability over the past year. To enhance the quality of our Warriors' barracks, the Department issued enterprise-wide guidance on unaccompanied housing habitability standards and improved the maintenance work order process by implementing digital work order systems across all installations. These actions, stemming from requirements in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA), were instrumental in closing eleven open recommendations from the Government Accountability Office.

Lastly, in direct response to the FY 2026 NDAA, the Department is addressing statutory requirements to modernize housing requirements and market analysis across the enterprise. To support this effort, the Department is developing the Housing Decision Support Tool, a modern analytic capability designed to improve the accuracy, consistency, and usability of housing data to inform decision-making. This capability is intended to replace legacy, manual processes with a more integrated, data-driven approach to assessing housing needs and market conditions. Together, these efforts strengthen the Department's ability to plan, prioritize, and oversee housing investments in alignment with Congressional direction and Department priorities.

### **Defense Restoration**

The Department remains focused on continuous improvement initiatives in the cleanup program: minimizing overhead, adopting new technologies to reduce cost and accelerate cleanup, and enhancing our relationships with state regulators and affected communities through increased dialogue and public engagement. These initiatives guarantee we maximize our available resources to complete cleanups and ensure our Service members can focus on the mission without concerns about environmental hazards affecting them and their families. The Department measures cleanup progress against the Response Complete (RC) milestone, which occurs when the cleanup activities are complete. Of the 41,502 DERP sites in the inventory, DoW has achieved the RC milestone at 34,577 sites (83-percent).

Chemicals of Emerging Concern and others like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) continue to pose challenges for DoW's cleanup program. New risk-based science requires reconsideration of previous decisions with new, challenging cleanup requirements resulting in the need for additional resources and technology solutions to protect our Service members, their families, communities, and the environment. We are working closely with the Council on Environmental Quality to ensure a whole-of-government approach to these persistent challenges. We are also working directly with our Environmental Protection Agency counterparts to expand opportunities to accelerate mitigation measures as quickly as possible.

In addition to cleanup activities, the Department is prioritizing efforts to eliminate the use of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) – a known source of PFAS – at military installations and transition to fluorine-free firefighting products in a safe and methodical manner that does not affect mission readiness. To date, six products have passed the qualification process and are available for purchase. The Military Departments are making significant progress in transitioning

their more than 7,000 mobile assets and approximately 1,000 facilities from AFFF to these fluorine-free products, with 90 percent of DoW fire trucks and over 20 percent of facilities having made the transition as of June 30, 2025.

## **GLOBAL POSTURE PRIORITIES**

### **Enhancing the Global Footprint**

Our strategic investments across our global installation portfolio—from the Pacific to the Arctic to Central America—form an integrated defense network essential for protecting the homeland, and the Department continues to engage with our host nation partners to provide our forces with the necessary installations and access to support the National Defense Strategy. These engagements include an increased focus on greater allied and partner burden-sharing and prioritizing investment in the most optimal locations.

One area of particular focus is the execution of several critical posture initiatives in Guam, which will help to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. Supporting evolving Joint Force Homeland defense and Pacific warfighting requirements, including the deployment of the Integrated Air and Missile Defense of Guam capability, the expansion of Polaris Point, and addressing damages from Typhoon Mawar, requires unprecedented levels of military construction to provide our forces with the resilient infrastructure needed to organize, train, equip, and, if necessary, deliver lethal combat power. This increasing demand for construction, compounded by labor and material shortages, has prompted a comprehensive approach to delivering the right capabilities to the warfighter and we appreciate the continued support of Congress in addressing these issues.

These efforts are supported by a partnership between the Departments of War and Interior and the Governments of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to develop a comprehensive Mariana Island Conservation Strategy (MICS) to accelerate mission-essential projects by streamlining Endangered Species Act compliance and reducing regulatory barriers. The MICS will address biosecurity, and invasive species risks that impact installation operations, the local economy, and human health and safety through a comprehensive, collaborative approach that balances infrastructure expansion and readiness with ecological integrity in these unique island environments.

Beyond Guam, the Department is focused on other key initiatives in support of the National Defense Strategy within the Indo-Pacific region. Through the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement in the Philippines, we are enhancing key sites to ensure they can serve as resilient platforms for a joint response to regional crises. In the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau, our investments in air and seaport infrastructure create secure logistical and dispersal nodes, enhancing the survivability of our forces and assets. In the CNMI, the rehabilitation of Tinian's airfields provides critical redundancy for our regional installations. These infrastructure projects are not merely about power projection; they are about building a forward-deployed, resilient network of installations that is fundamental to National Defense Strategy priorities.

This global importance on homeland defense extends to the High North, a region of growing strategic importance. The Department's Arctic Strategy is executed through its installations,

which serve as the northern flank of our national defense. We are investing in the modernization of critical infrastructure, including in Alaska and at Pituffik Space Base in Greenland, to provide persistent, all-domain awareness and early warning.

The Department is also focusing on ensuring that our installation footprint in the Western Hemisphere supports defense of the U.S. homeland and our hemispheric interests. Our cooperative security locations in Panama provide the necessary infrastructure to counter illicit trafficking and promote regional stability, directly contributing to the security of our border. These installations are fundamental to ensuring the security and accessibility of the Panama Canal, a strategic chokepoint vital to our economic prosperity and the global mobility of our forces.

Congress' continued support for these initiatives is paramount to building the resilient and secure infrastructure necessary to defend our nation and its interests. We thank Congress for providing temporary authorities for certain workers to support military construction work on Wake Island in the FY 2026 NDAA and we look forward to building upon this progress in the FY 2027 cycle.

## **Hawaii**

The relationship between the U.S. Military and Hawai'i has been a critical piece of U.S. military and diplomatic strategy for over 125 years. Hawai'i's strategic location in the Pacific, unique training and port areas, and support for critical defense missions make it a cornerstone of our posture in the Indo-Pacific region. In support of this indispensable defense mission, the Military Departments have jurisdiction over approximately 222,000 acres of land in Hawai'i, roughly four percent of Hawai'i's land base. This includes approximately 39,000 acres in land leases and easements from the State of Hawaii which are going to expire between 2029-2032. These lands provide ideal locations for specialized defense capabilities, multi-domain operating areas to generate future force readiness, and training ranges that our Joint Force leverages with allies and partners. Retaining these mission critical training lands is a top priority to support the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) warfighter.

The Department recognizes that past incidents, particularly the fuel and concentrated AFFF spills at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility and the diesel spill at the Maui Space Surveillance Complex, have resulted in a loss of public trust between the DoW and Hawai'i residents. The situation has underscored the importance of working collaboratively with stakeholders to address the Department's continued management and use of lands and natural resources in Hawai'i.

Military personnel in Hawai'i are working to engage consistently, respectfully, and transparently to strengthen relationships in support of the shared goals of national security, economic prosperity, and a healthy environment. The Hawaii Coordination Cell (HCC), established within EI&E, is working closely with the Military Departments, USINDOPACOM, and OSW counterparts to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach to support these efforts. The HCC serves as a primary point of contact for state and local officials, businesses, community organizations, and Hawai'i residents to connect with military personnel, engage in dialogue about key issues of concern and create opportunities for collaboration. These activities are essential to enable the continuation of the critical military missions in Hawai'i.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this energy, installations, and environment program update. We appreciate Congress' continued support for our enterprise and look forward to working with you.